Many literacy teachers have experienced adult L2 literacy students answering conventional questions after having read a text in rather unconventional, unexpected ways: looking at their own watch or taking their own calendar in answering questions about time or date in the text, relating questions about a first-person character (the I in the narrative) to their own, direct experience, declining the truth of a general, logical statement, or asking about how a seriously ill person in a story is doing nowadays. They seem to struggle between their own context, here and now, and more distant worlds constructed in texts.

Empirical evidence suggests that cognition starts as embodied and embedded, that 'Great Divide' theories between literates and non-literate have to be nuanced, and that deductive reasoning (or abstract logical thinking) is not uniquely tied to having learned to read and write. However, there is intriguing evidence that on average L2 non-literate and low-literate adults do differ in solving simple syllogisms, the first mostly reacting in concrete, experience-based ways, the other in treating the premises as self-contained packages of information not requiring context-bound experience for being understood. Even more intriguing is how L2 adult beginning readers move from one way of solving the logical problem to the other and how that might be related to their L2 acquisition.

To get further insight into these processes, we will take a closer look at the results of our studies on low-educated second language and literacy adults (LESLLA) in which syllogistic tasks were used, with special attention to the 'in-betweens', such as the non-literates who diverged from the average, those who behaved more like the literates or those who clearly showed a learning effect from item to item, and if that is related to their L2 acquisition success.

Keywords: cognition, literacy, adult L2 acquisition.